Descendants of Northampton County Families.

THE YOHE-STECHER-WEYGANDT REUNION HELD IN WASHINGTON COUNTY, THIS STATE.

Greetings Sent from Old Home.

Interesting Reminiscences of the History of the Early Families From Along the Bushkill and in the Nazareths Recalled.

Among the earliest families to locate in Northampton county after its formation in 1752 were those of Yohe, Stecher and Weygandt. Adam Yohe resided in Easton in 1755, his name appearing as a subscriber to the public school fund. He was also well known as a tavern keeper and during the Indian treaty of 1757 Governor Hamilton lodged at his house. Later in the century his son, Adam Yohe, Jr., has succeeded him in dispensing "Entertainment for Man and Beast." Cotemporaneous with Adam Yohe was Michael Yohe, a cord-wainer, but their relationship is unknown. Both of them served in the Revolutionary War.

Melchior Stecher, the immigrant ancestor of this family, came to America in the ship Adventurer in 1732, locating in Upper Milford township, Bucks county, Pa., and afterwards on the Bushkill, so called by the Dutch of Esopus, but named Lefevere Creek by the Scotch-Irish in honor of the landlord John Lefevere, at whose hostelry on the site of Messinger's tavern of modern times, the surveyors who laid out Easton in 1750, lodged and took their meals and toddy. Among those who sought shelter at the inn at Nazareth during the threatened Indian outbreak about 1763, were the Stechers, whose seedling apple is in high esteem to the present day. The site where Melchior Stecher located was in the vicinity of the present Tatamy; named for that well known Delaware Indian—the interpreter of the missionary David Brainerd—and whose friendship the Stechers enjoyed for several generations. The tract of land which the State patented to Tatamy in 1776 subsequently came in possession of George Stecher, a son of Melchior Stecher, and afterwards was owned and occupied by John Stecher, a son of George Stecher. Melchior Stecher pursued the occupation of a farmer, in which he accumulated a considerable competency. He at various times occupied minor political offices and was prominent in affairs of the Lutheran Church, to which most of his descendents have since held allegiance. He died in 1786 and is buried in the Old Forks churchyard. His wife, Eva Christiana (maiden name unknown), died in 1773. Among their children were Lewis, a captain in the Revolutionary War, and for some time Justice of the Peace in Northampton county, Christopher; a daughter, Barbara, married Cornelius Waygandt 2nd, a neighbor, son of Cornelius Weygandt 1st.

Cornelius Weygandt 1st, a native of Osthofen, near the city of Worms on the Rhine, came to America in the ship Harle in 1736, locating in Germantown, where he married the daughter of the Rev. John Bechtel, prominently identified with the early ecclesiastical history of this commonwealth and whose catechism, printed by Benjamin Franklin, is one of the rarest of Americana. In 1755 Mr. Weygandt removed to the Lehigh Hills opposite Bethlehem, and in 1760, to the Bushkill Valley, and erected the old stone house which formerly stood on the east side of the creek opposite Tatamy station. Cornelius Weygandt 1st died in 1799, and is buried in the beautiful God's-acre of the Moravian Church at Schoeneck, adjacent to the ancient barony of Nazareth, his wife having preceded him to the grave by ten years. They had a family of four sons and four

daughters. One of these sons, Cornelius 2nd, born 1741 (served in the Revolutionary War and died in Washington county, Pa., in 1828), married Barbara, a daughter of Melchior Stecher. The eldest son John, who never married, identified himself with the Moravian Economy at Bethlehem. Jacob, the second son, is the ancestor of most of the descendants now living in Northampton county. The other children were:

Maria, died young;
Hannah, married Conrad Best;
Maria Agneta, married Henry Fraes;
Susanna, married Peter Ihrig.

Immediately following the close of the Revolutionary War a tide of emigration westward and northward began from Northampton county. Scotch-Irish from Hunter's Settlement (Lower Mount Bethel), and the Craig or Irish Settlement (East Allen township) proceeded to the east and west branches of the Susquehanna, the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia and thence into Tennessee. The Germans for the most part located in Central, Western and Southwestern Pennsylvania.

Between 1784 and 1790 Lewis Stecher, in company with his brother, Christopher, and Cornelius Weygandt 2nd, Peter Weygandt and their wives, and the Weygandt sisters, Susanna and Maria Agneta, with their husbands, Peter Ihrig and Henry Fraes, respectively, bade their aged parents an affectionate farewell and guided by the star of Empire followed the trail across the Allegheny Mountains and located six miles west of the Monongahela river, thirty miles south of Pittsburg in what is now Carroll township, Washington county, Pa. Subsequently Peter Weygandt and his two sisters, with their families proceeded to Ohio, locating in Stark and Wayne counties, where their descendants reside to the present day.

In 1794 Michael Yohe accompanied Washington's army in a civil capacity to Southwestern Pennsylvania in the very locality where the Stechers and Weygandts had previously settled—the scene of the threatened "Whiskey Insurrection," which the Rev. Dr. McCook so ably treats in his novel, "The Latimers." Here Mr. Yohe beheld the beautiful country adjacent to the Monongahela Valley and, inspired by its attractiveness and the invitations doubtless received from his old neighbors, the Stechers and Weygandts, located here also, his son Isaac subsequently marrying Elizabeth Stecher, a granddaughter of Christopher Stecher through his son Lewis, a nephew of Captain Lewis Stecher. It is the descendants of these early settlers, nearly three hundred in number, who on September 19 last held an interesting and successful reunion on the very ground where their ancestors originally settled and where their descendents in a number of instances have occupied the same ground for a century and a quarter.

There was, however, a touch of sadness in the occasion by reason of the death on the day previous of the oldest of these descendants, Jonas Weygandt, aged 90 years, the third in descent from Cornelius Weygandt 1st, as also from Melchior Stecher, and who had looked forward to this reunion for months with the deepest interest. He was born in the old Weygandt homestead near "Mount Joy," erected by Cornelius Weygandt 2nd (his grandfather) upon removing to that region about 1790, which house is still standing and has been occupied successively by a Cornelius Weygandt to a recent time, the last of these, Cornelius, a bachelor brother of Jonas, having died only a few years ago. Mr. Weygandt spent his life on the homestead of his ancestors engaged in agricultural pursuits, taking up his residence in Monongahela City some years ago where he had lived retired with his daughters and among his kindred. He was a man of fine presence, six feet in height, erect and of a commanding patriarchal appearance and was held in high esteem by all who knew him. He had a fund of information and tradition and was fond of relating incidents of the experiences of the early settlers. Mr. Weygandt adhered to the faith of his ancestors and was a devout member of the Lutheran Church.

The early hours of Thursday, September 19, were ushered in by a refreshing shower but by daylight all clouds had disappeared, the atmosphere had been delightfully cooled and the roads made dustless and by 9 o'clock carriages containing the fruendschaft were proceeding towards "Ginger Hill," the objective point, located in the midst of the "wide-acres," once the property of Michael Yohe, Lewis and Christopher Stecher and Cornelius Weygandt 2nd. This spot with its hallowed associations does not, however, derive its name by reason of any spice injected into the sermons preached within the sa-

cred edifice which stands thereon. Boyd Crumrine, Esq., of Washington, Pa., an authority on the local history and traditions of this neighborhood, explains the origin of the name as follows:

"David Hamilton (brother of Colonel John Hamilton, who was implicated among the insurgents in the Whiskey Insurrection) lived and kept a public house at the place now known by that name ("Ginger Hill"), and, when the United States forces were in the county making arrests, received word that the officers and a squad of their men would stop with him for entertainment on a certain night. Mr. David Hamilton was a straight out Presbyterian, a Justice of the Peace also, and though he was not implicated in the insurrection himself he strongly sympathized with it; and when he was notified that he must entertain the United States officers, he said to his neighbors that he 'would give them ginger.'

"And he did it. His whiskey punch was so disguised with ginger, and so thoroughly appreciated that the next day his guests were unable to get out after other insurgents who thus escaped. The place then became known as "Ginger Hill.'"

At the Yohe ancestral home, now occupied by Isaac Stecher, our party regaled itself at the old well. A few moments and we were in sight of "Ginger Hill"—a knoll on which is located Zion's Lutheran Church, built in 1847, the successor of the "Stecher Church," erected about 1784, which is still standing and occupied as a dwelling. After numerous introductions and efforts at explaining relationship, which sometimes were quite complicated by reason of the intermarriages of the three families, and the relating of incidents and traditions concerning former generations, the party partook of a bountiful dinner prepared on the picnic plan provided by the ladies of the several families represented, long tables having been erected in a piece of woodland opposite the church which is still known as "Weygandt's Woods." After doing justice to this feature of the occasion the party was photographed, after which it assembled in the church where the meeting was called to order by Mr. Isaac Yohe, of Monongahela City (Parkinson's Ferry of our ancestors' day), the president of the Yohe, Stecher and Weygandt Historical Society, whereupon the following program was carried out:

Singing of the Long Metre Doxology;
Opening address by President Yohe;
Hymn—"Blest Be the Tie That Binds";
Greetings on behalf of the Yohe, Stecher and Weygandt descendants residing in Eastern Pennsylvania, by Ethan Allen Weaver, Germantown, Pa.
Address by J. B. Yohe, of Pittsburg, Pa.
Hymn—"God Be With You Till We Meet Again."
Benediction by the Rev. H. E. Berkey, pastor of the Lutheran Church, Monongahela City.

Mr. Weaver's address was accompanied by a historical, biographical and genealogical account of the three families which the society unanimously decided to print in pamphlet form for distribution among its members.

His words of greeting on behalf of the families residing in Easton, Pa., are as follows:

E. A. Weaver's Address.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen; Kinswomen and Kinsmen: One hundred and ten years ago the Moravian missionary, John Heckewelder, in company with Judge William Henry, of Nazareth, and others of Northampton county, proceeded to Gnadenhutten on the Muskingum, in Ohio, to arrange for surveys of a tract of land donated by Congress for use of the Christian Indians. On their homeward journey they passed through the region of country in which we are today assembled and Heckewelder in his narrative of the expedition records the following:

"Early on the morning of the 11th (July, 1797) we left Washington and by evening reached Cornelius Weygandt's, who received us in a friendly manner. We took dinner with him. His brother-in-law, L. Stecher, Esq., came with his wife to see us, and both they and Weygandts rode with us as far as the Monongahela, where they took a friendly farewell, sending many messages to their friends in Nazareth.

"The distance from Washington to Weygandt's is 17 miles * * * *."

My friends, today I bring affectionate greetings from the descendants of those friends at Nazareth, as also from those in the picturesque and fertile valley of the Bushkill in the historic Forks of the Delaware, and from old Germantown, where the progenitor of the Weygandt family in America first located and where his son bearing the same name, the an-

cestor of those in Southwestern Pennsylvania, was born.

I am here representing both the Stecher and Weygandt families of Eastern Pennsylvania; my mother's mother was born a Stecher and my father's grandmother Weaver was born a Weygandt. Did time permit, I could relate much concerning the personal characteristics of our people which the present generations have inherited to a greater or less degree. They continue to be industrious, frugal and God-fearing. They have advanced with the times and have discarded many of the old customs and superstitions. They no longer make vinegar by dropping beans into a barrel of cider and giving to each bean the name of some scolding woman of the neighborhood, nor do they believe in the omen that the barking of a dog at night presages a death—unless it be that of the dog; but you may still find the Farmer's or Family almanac hanging at the kitchen mantel, where frequent reference is made to it, especially in the planting seasons to see that the seeds and bulbs are not placed in the ground in the wrong turn of the horns of the moon.

I am sure you will be interested in some notes which I have prepared concerning the Weygandt family. A similar account of the Stecher family you are, I believe, already familiar with and doubtless your president has or will tell you something about the Yohes, a less numerous but equally as honorable a family as the two mentioned.

My friends, I cannot express to you our pleasure in being present at this gathering of our kinsfolk. I am glad to say that in our section of the country the annual gathering of families has become a permanent institution. The month of August is prolific in these reunions, and recently at least twenty different families held reunions in old Northampton county alone, evidencing their desire to obey the scriptural injunction, "Remember the days of old and consider the years of many generations." I hope that in the near future efforts may be made to bring together the Yohes, Stechers and Weygandts of Eastern Pennsylvania, and that you may all be present with us and enjoy as we have today the coming together of old and new friends, and that these gatherings may stimulate such interest as to persuade someone to undertake the compilation of our family histories, for as Edmund Burke has said, "People will not look forward to posterity who never look backward to their ancestors."

Other Incidents of the Day.

The address of Mr. J. B. Yohe was replete with reminiscences of his boyhood days in this locality and closed by introducing a resolution which was unanimously approved, thanking the officers of the association and the ladies for the entertainment provided and for the other arrangements which made the reunion so eminently successful. Mr. Yohe has risen from the ranks and is now the general manager of the Pittsburg & Lake Erie Railroad Company. It was decided that the society arrange for the preservation and care of the present church edifice and adjacent burial ground as also the burial ground about a quarter of a mile distant where lie buried the ancestors of these families.

Among those present from a distance were Samuel Stecher, of Ohio, at whose home in Wayne county, a reunion of Stecher descendants residing in Ohio, was held on September 11th, and who served three years in the Union army during the Civil War and for a long time was confined as a prisoner of war in one of the prison pens of the Southern Confederacy; John Yohe, who also served three years in the Union army, accompanying Sherman in his march to the sea; Mr. Lindsey, Commissioner United States Circuit Court, Pittsburg, and others bearing the names of Yohe, Stecher and Weygandt from Ohio, Iowa and other points in the West and along the Monongahela Valley.

About 4 o'clock in the afternoon farewells were spoken and the participants in this interesting occasion began to wend their way homeward. Our little party, of which Mr. Isaac Yohe was the guide, proceeded to the ancient graveyard, passing in the distance the homestead of Christopher Stecher. Here were seen the graves of the early settlers who came from then far-off Eastern Pennsylvania and located in this land of promise. Continuing across the fields and down the slope of a hill into a valley we reached the ancestral home erected by Lewis Stecher, about 1784. It is built of stone with beautiful colonial outlines. The condition of the house, farm buildings and surroundings suggest the home of a prosperous Northampton county farmer. The present owner and occupant is Mr. James Williams. The land in this immediate lo-

cality has increased fabulously in price since the first settlers located there. An excellent quality of soft coal and gas underlies the whole region of country. Retracing our footsteps several hundred yards we find ourselves at the site of "Stecher's Church," where the residents of the "Dutch Settlement" (as it was called) worshipped after the Lutheran form until the construction of the new church on "Ginger Hill." It is now a private residence owned and occupied by Mr. Joseph Irwin, with a beautiful well-kept lawn and with attractive natural surroundings, being located in a vale surrounded by well-cultivated fields and woodlands. To this sacred spot the pioneer settlers came for many miles to hear the word of God and partake of the sacrament. By taking a circuitous route homeward we pass the old log house on the Cornelius Weygandt estate. This building has sometimes been called the first Theological Seminary of the West and of the Ohio Synod; in it the Rev. George Henry Weygandt (born in Northampton county in 1779), son of Cornelius Weygandt 2nd, was prepared for the ministry by the Rev. Johannes Stauch, the pastor of "Stecher's Church." Rev. Weygandt afterwards, for a period of twenty years, was pastor of the Stecher congregation and until his death in 1847, was one of the leading Lutheran clergymen in the Ohio Synod. A photograph of the old log house, taken several years ago, has in the foreground Isaac Stecher and Jonas Weygandt, the two eldest descendants in the male line of the first settlers of that name.

It is difficult to describe one's feelings in visiting a country so closely identified with the history of our own kin, but there is pleasure in the thought that the descendants of these families, who have a deep reverence for the olden times and their ancestors, will preserve through their organization the history and traditions of their people. The historical society formed with this end in view is officered by men thoroughly competent to carry on the work and with an interest in the work which is not likely to become lukewarm. An organization to keep alive the history and traditions of these ancestors was the conception of Mr. Isaac Yohe, a successful man of business affairs residing in Monongahela City, who since his youth has kept in touch with these several families, with all of whom he is related and to whom appeals the preservation of the old landmarks. Mr. Yohe has traveled over the world and in his collections are many rare coins and other curios which he personally secured in the Holy Land and elsewhere. His estimable wife is interested with him and gives encouragement to his work as do also his seven brothers and their families. As the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Yohe we enjoyed several days of genuine hospitality in their beautiful home overlooking the Monongahela Valley. Both are deeply interested in the religious and civic work of the community.

Our kinsmen of this region are very much of the same character as those whom we would meet in the locality from whence came their ancestors. A visit to the old Forks Church upon the occasion of any special anniversary service during the summer months would bring together just such people as we met west of the Alleghenys. The German language is, however, no longer spoken. Many of those of sixty years of age and upwards remember that their parents spoke the Pennsylvania German dialect, and they themselves have a smattering of the tongue, but the young and middle-aged speak English exclusively and all have availed themselves of the opportunities given for obtaining an education. They are a home-loving people who enjoy to entertain their friends and kin. Their hospitality upon the occasion of our visit will be a lasting memory.

Ethan Allen Weaver.

Germantown, Pa., Oct. 12, 1907.